

BUILDING NATION UNDER ARMS

Russia From Mobilization to Military Socialization



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INSTITUTE FOR CONFLICT STUDIES AND ANALYSIS OF RUSSIA



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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Russia's substantial wartime losses and declining effectiveness of contract-based recruitment raise growing questions about its ability to sustain the front's manpower needs without renewed mass mobilization. IKAR's study examines Russia's available and emerging mechanisms for replenishing military personnel, public attitudes toward mass mobilization and its potential political consequences, and the feasibility of various mobilization scenarios. Based on these findings, the study assesses the constraints on Kremlin decision-making and forecasts measures the Russian authorities may adopt to address the projected need for hundreds of thousands of additional personnel.

The main objectives of the research include:

- Examine public attitudes in the Russian Federation toward the introduction of a new wave of mass forced mobilization, with particular attention to the potential political and social consequences of such a decision.
- Assess Russia's actual capacity to meet the front's manpower requirements, including the sustainability and limitations of existing military recruitment approaches.
- Identify and analyze the technologies, mechanisms, and additional recruitment capacities being developed by the Russian authorities to meet the front's manpower requirements without conducting overt mass mobilization.
- Assess Russia's capacity to implement various mobilization scenarios, combining formal and informal recruitment mechanisms, targeted mobilization measures, and other instruments for replenishing military manpower.

Research Tools:

OchiAI – an AI-powered monitoring tool for real-time analysis of Russian digital media, including social media platforms.

War of Words – an AI-powered monitoring tool for real-time Russian TV and video content analysis.

This report draws on IKAR's multi-year, comprehensive sociological research in Russia, which combines both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Representative quantitative surveys were conducted at both the national and regional levels. The surveys used CATI (Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing) methodology, which involves telephone interviews based on an interactive, structured questionnaire and specialized software for conducting sociological research.

All nationwide quantitative surveys conducted between 2022 and 2026 used the same sampling and sociodemographic parameters. The core questionnaire was repeated across all ten waves of the nationwide study, making it possible to track changes in Russians' attitudes toward a range of issues related to the war and mobilization.

In addition to the nationwide quantitative surveys, regional quantitative surveys were conducted using the same questionnaire. This makes it possible to compare nationwide and regional attitudes toward mass mobilization.

Alongside the quantitative approach, our conclusions also draw on qualitative research, specifically dozens of in-depth interviews conducted in major Russian cities. In-depth interviews are a qualitative method and therefore cannot provide formally representative data. However, they offer additional insights and a deeper understanding of the subject by capturing respondents' own accounts and everyday interpretations of significant experiences.

The research also covers a wide range of Russian and international media sources, including federal and regional media, official publications by government authorities, as well as popular and specialized outlets. A separate component of the research involves collecting, classification and analysis of statistical data from open sources and specialized institutions. Information was collected and verified using open-source intelligence (OSINT) methods.

In assessing the information, we considered the reliability and provenance of sources, publication dates, the completeness and context of the data, and potential political, institutional, or commercial motivations. Where possible, key factual claims and quantitative indicators were cross-checked against multiple independent sources.

KEY FINDINGS

Russian society does not support a new wave of mass mobilization. This is a fundamental public attitude that Russia's military-political leadership cannot ignore when considering such a decision. Negative attitudes toward compulsory mobilization became entrenched during and after the first wave, carried out in the autumn of 2022. Since the beginning of 2024, the share of Russians opposed to a new mobilization has remained virtually unchanged, at around three-quarters of the population.

The Russian authorities must also take into account two important changes in public attitudes since the first wave of compulsory recruitment into the army. First, the **number of Russians who support compulsory mobilization has fallen by half**, from 24% in early 2023 to 11% in 2026. Second, differences between age groups on this issue have narrowed.

While an absolute majority of young Russians were and remain opposed to such a step, the older generation showed considerably greater support for mass mobilization – as high as around 30% as recently as early 2023. Today, however, the differences between younger, middle-aged, and older Russians are no longer significant: an **absolute majority in every age group opposes a second wave** of mobilization.

Two other important factors shape public attitudes in Russia in general and perceptions of mobilization in particular: the **absence of an ideological foundation** for the Russian-Ukrainian war that is accepted by a majority of Russians, and the absence of a clear vision of victory in the war.

The first factor is not critical when the army relies on contract recruitment, but it becomes critical in the case of compulsory mobilization. Second, the **absence of a vision of victory articulated by the state**, – has a negative effect both on society's perception of mobilization and on the willingness of large numbers of citizens to sign military contracts, even in exchange for high payments. After all, the absence of a vision of victory pushes the prospect of demobilization indefinitely into the future and, in turn, increases the perceived likelihood of being killed or seriously wounded. Over the years of full-scale war, these risks have become increasingly apparent to most Russians and are no longer perceived as remote or unlikely, particularly given that most Russians have relatives or acquaintances who have participated in the war or been killed in action.

Russian propaganda relies on several strategic narratives to justify the war and the possibility of compulsory mobilization. The first presents the war as a struggle against fascism and, therefore, as a righteous cause. The second invokes victory in the Great Patriotic War (1941–1945) as the central myth of modern Russia: by participating in the war, Russians are portrayed as repeating the feat of their grandfathers and great-grandfathers. The third narrative frames the Russian-Ukrainian war as a conflict actually being waged against Russia's eternal and existential adversary – the collective West, while portraying Russians as the bearers and defenders of genuine universal human values. Among other things, this narrative serves to justify the protracted nature of the war and the need to mobilize all of Russia's resources for victory, including by mobilizing a larger number of Russian men. Finally, the fourth narrative portrays participants in the war against Ukraine as modern-day heroes, drawing parallels with Soviet soldiers who liberated Europe.

The Russian authorities have failed to establish a coherent ideological foundation capable of generating mass voluntary participation by Russians in the war against Ukraine, particularly participation driven by ideological rather than material interests. On the contrary, their actions over the years have contributed to the dominance of pragmatic rather than ideological motives in decisions to sign contracts with the Russian Ministry of Defense.

As the war has continued, the state apparatus has been forced to expand its activities beyond the production of purely pro-war narratives. By 2025–2026, the stability of Russia's political system increasingly rested on three elements: **managing public discontent, restricting access to alternative sources of information, and building a system of military socialization.** The first two elements are primarily reactive and aimed at managing a society for which mass compulsory mobilization is an extraordinary and highly undesirable event. Far more important and fundamental in nature is the third element: the construction of a comprehensive system of military socialization. This system already encompasses preschool, school, and higher education in Russia. Its ultimate goal is to raise generations for whom both war and mass mobilization will be regarded as normal, and even expected, aspects of life.

The Russian authorities have learned lessons from the first wave of compulsory mobilization. By the autumn of 2026, they are significantly better prepared for partial mobilization than they were four years earlier. This applies to both the legal and administrative aspects of mobilization.

The capabilities for tracking mobilization resources, the completeness of information about their current place of residence, workplace, and immediate social circle, as well as the range of restrictive measures, including a ban on leaving the country even through allied Belarus, are now extensive. Compared with 2022, employers, both state-owned and private, will be assigned a much greater role and responsibility in the event of mass mobilization, both in notifying employees and in ensuring that, after receiving summonses, those liable for military service report to military enlistment offices. This also includes far greater capabilities for geolocating those liable for military service, which now makes it more difficult for them to evade mobilization by changing their place of residence or moving to another region of the country.

At present, **Russia's contract recruitment system has reached its ceiling**. This is confirmed by the monthly number of contracts signed, the quality of manpower arriving in the armed forces, and the enormous differences in regional payments, which can amount to 1,000%. The system of mass recruitment of prisoners for combat operations, first tested by the Wagner PMC, became a state policy from 2023 onward and was also expanded to include all Russians who have problems with the law – from the stage of investigation or even simple detention through to the issuing of a court ruling. However, this approach is also incapable of significantly increasing the monthly number of contracts signed. Nor can this be achieved through the recruitment of migrants, foreigners, and Russians who have only recently obtained citizenship, the cancellation of debts for borrowers, or pressure on conscripts and reservists. In 2026, the Ministry of Defense and, especially, regional authorities had to **involve employers and commission-based recruitment agencies** in contract recruitment. Spending on the latter increased several times, from an average of RUB 358 million per month in 2025 to RUB 802 million per month in January–April 2026.

Another category of the population increasingly targeted by recruitment efforts is Russian university students. The recruitment of young people who have not completed higher education, which intensified many times over in 2026, should be viewed less in terms of quantitative indicators and more as an attempt to improve the quality of recruited contract soldiers. Formally, students are recruited into the Unmanned Systems Forces rather than conventional infantry units. De facto, however, there is no separate Ministry of Defense contract for students, and after signing a contract they may ultimately be sent to serve as ordinary assault troops. In practice, the **recruitment of students as a higher-quality mobilization resource** is carried out through a combination of financial incentives, false promises regarding conditions of service, and administrative coercion. Trends in recent months indicate that recruitment of this particular category of those liable for military service will only intensify, regardless of whether mass compulsory mobilization begins or not.

DYNAMICS OF SUPPORT FOR MASS MOBILIZATION IN RUSSIA: 2022-2026

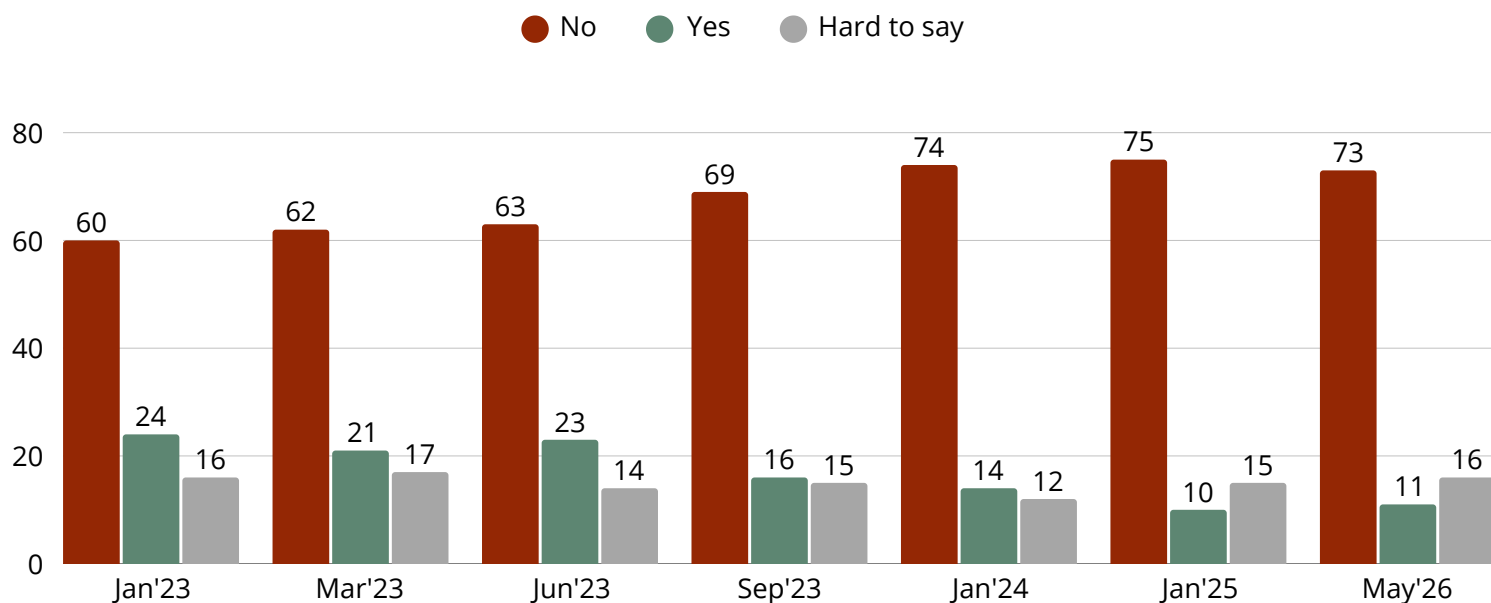
The September 2022 mobilization marked a major turning point in Russian society's experience of the war. By extending the direct costs of the conflict beyond military personnel, contract soldiers, and volunteers, it brought the prospect of combat into the lives of a much broader segment of the population. This increased public anxiety, demand for information, and sensitivity to the war's social consequences.

The mobilization also triggered some of the largest anti-mobilization protests since the full-scale invasion. More than 1,300 people were detained nationwide within the first 24 hours, while Dagestan saw particularly significant demonstrations, including road blockades and clashes with police. At the same time, growing state repression made public protest increasingly risky.

Public opinion polling shows that mobilization remains a particularly sensitive issue. Between 2022 and 2026, opposition to another wave of mobilization consistently exceeded what might be expected from broader levels of support for the war. Resistance was especially pronounced among younger respondents and residents of larger cities, but even older people and residents of smaller towns and rural areas, groups more likely to support the authorities, largely rejected renewed mobilization.

The experience demonstrated the limits of passive acceptance when the costs of war became more personal and immediate. In response, the authorities increasingly combined repression and preventive measures with efforts to shape public perceptions of the conflict through propaganda, education, historical narratives, and the glorification of military service.

DYNAMICS OF SUPPORT FOR MASS MOBILIZATION IN RUSSIA: 2022-2026. NATIONWIDE ATTITUDES.

Should Another Wave of Partial Mobilization Be Carried Out? — Dynamics of Attitudes, %

1.1 NATIONWIDE ATTITUDES

Russians may accept the war as a political cause, but they overwhelmingly reject paying for it with their own lives.

Russians have a clear and long-standing view of a second wave of mass forced mobilization. It was formed largely immediately after the first wave of mobilization in autumn 2022 and was negative from the outset. In the following years, opposition to mass forced mobilization only grew stronger — from 60% in January 2023 to 74% in January 2024, and it has remained at roughly this level ever since. At the same time, the share of those who supported such a step fell from 24% in January 2023 to 11% in May 2026.

11%

**of those who support
a new wave of partial
mobilization in 2026
compared to 24% in
2023**

MOBILIZATION SENTIMENTS

The Russian authorities are therefore well aware of these stable public attitudes and have reinforced them over the years. This reflects both in the daily reports of the Russian Ministry of Defense and statements by the country's military and political leadership about numerous successes on the battlefield, as well as in constant assurances that the Russian army does not need another mass mobilization because the number of people willing to sign contracts is sufficient to meet its personnel needs.

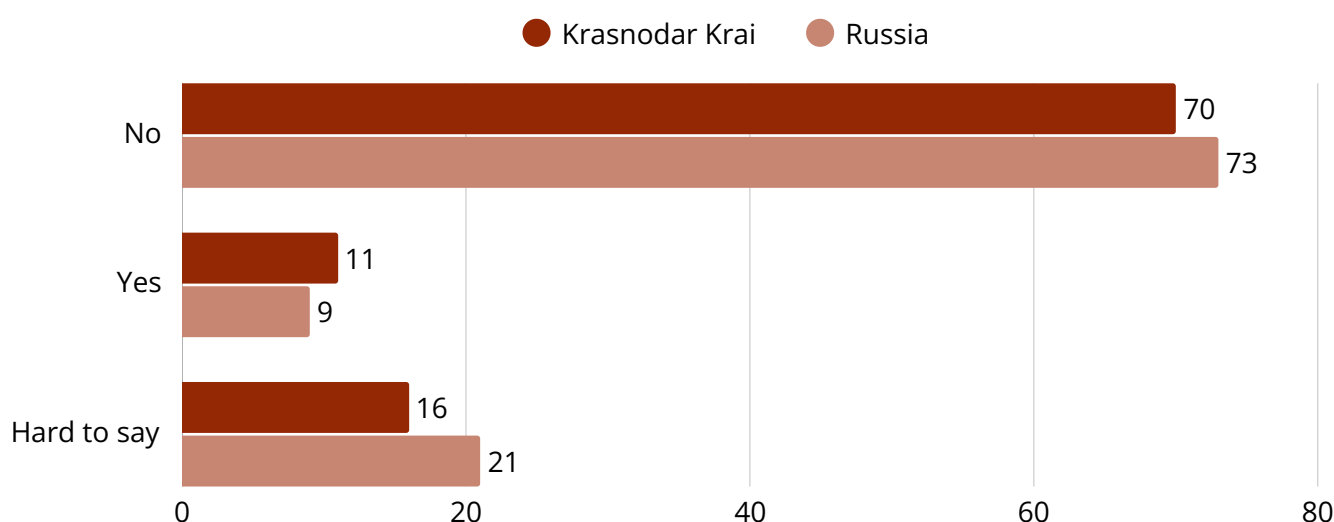
In other words, Russian propaganda has effectively reinforced the belief that forced mobilization is not necessary because Russia is winning. By contrast, mobilization in Ukraine has been presented as evidence of its weakness and inevitable defeat. If Moscow were to launch another forced mobilization, it would mean admitting that the situation is not going well and that Russia is facing the same difficult circumstances as Kyiv.

Another important factor behind opposition to mobilization is the failure of Russian propaganda to provide society with a clear ideological basis for the war. Since autumn 2022, the system for replenishing the army has relied primarily on pragmatic rather than ideological motivation: people are encouraged to go to war in exchange for money, freedom, citizenship, debt cancellation, or other rewards.

Finally, Russians' own experience has also shaped their reluctance to take part in the war. The scale and duration of the fighting mean that an overwhelming majority of Russians know someone who is taking part in the war, and most also know someone who's been killed. Moreover, today one-third of Russians have one or more relatives who have taken part in the war, while 21% have one or more relatives who have been killed.

As a result, participation in the war and death in combat are not seen by Russians as something distant or abstract. Instead, they can imagine these possibilities happening to themselves because they see many such examples in their immediate social circles, not to mention among friends and colleagues.

Should Another Wave of Partial Mobilization Be Carried Out? — Comparison of Attitudes in Krasnodar Krai and Across Russia, %



1.2 REGIONAL ATTITUDES: THE CASE OF KRASNODAR KRAI

It is important to note that regional attitudes toward forced mobilization are very similar to those at the national level. In Krasnodar Krai, one of the regions that sends the largest numbers of Russians to the war and, consequently, has suffered some of the highest losses among its residents, 70% oppose a new wave of mobilization. Only 9% support it.

Thus, Krasnodar Krai's leading position in terms of the number of people sent to the Russian-Ukrainian war is not the result of stronger ideological support among the local population. Instead, it reflects administrative measures taken by the regional authorities.

The same pattern can be seen in other regions, both those that send large numbers of Russian citizens to the front and those that send comparatively fewer.

MOBILIZATION SENTIMENTS

1.3 DIFFERENCES IN HOW SOCIAL GROUPS PERCEIVE MOBILIZATION

To understand public opinion in Russia on a possible new wave of mass mobilization, it is important to look at differences between age groups and how these attitudes have changed over time.

Young people under 30 have opposed forced mobilization from the beginning. More than three-quarters of young Russians did not support it. Both in 2023 and today, a clear majority of Russians aged 18–30 remain opposed to a second wave of mass mobilization.

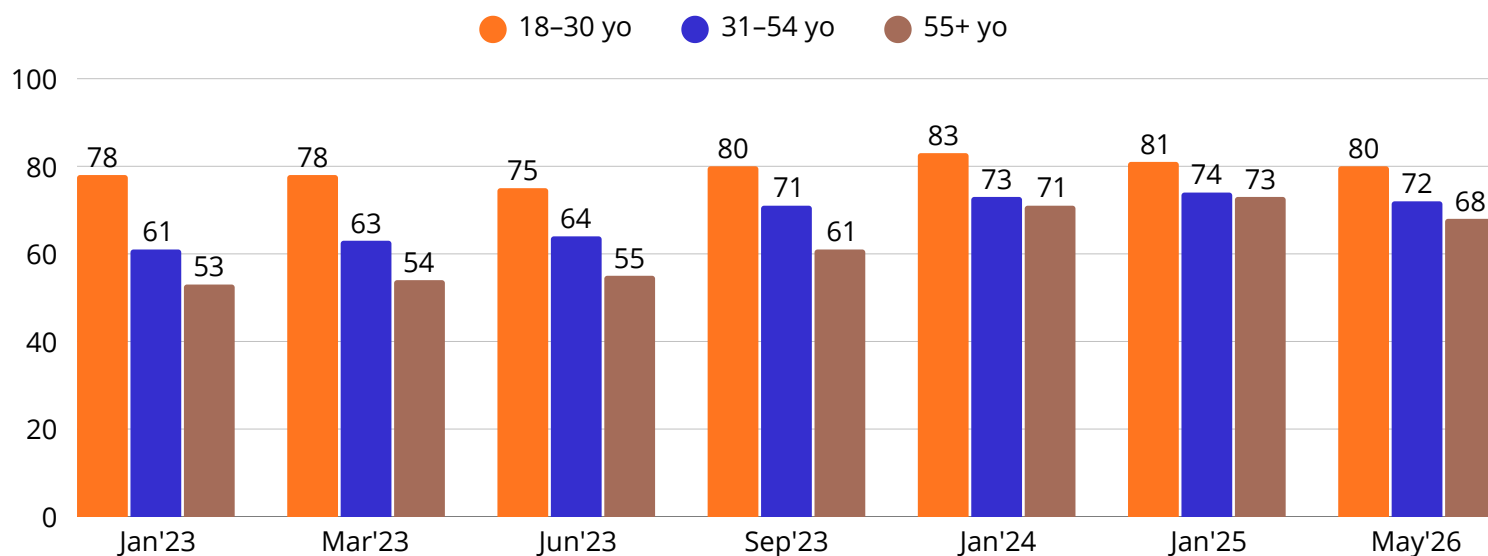
The middle-aged and older generations, however, have shown a clear shift in their attitudes since the first wave of mobilization. Most Russians aged 31–54 opposed another forced recruitment into the army, but the share of opponents stood at 61% in early 2023. It increased to almost three-quarters only in early 2024.

The most significant change occurred among older Russians aged 55 and above. In 2023, 53% opposed mobilization, while this group had the highest level of support for it among all age groups. This difference was largely explained by the fact that mobilization did not directly threaten people in this age group, as well as by the stronger influence of patriotic messaging and Russian propaganda. It is therefore particularly important to note that by January 2025, resistance to new mobilization among Russia's elderly population had increased by 20 percent compared to 2023, reaching 73%.

This means that even the core electorate of Vladimir Putin, the main political figure behind the continuation of the war and, therefore, ultimately responsible for any new mobilization — opposes it.

DYNAMICS OF SUPPORT FOR MASS MOBILIZATION IN RUSSIA BY AGE GROUP: 2022-2026

*Should Another Wave of Partial Mobilization Be Carried Out? — Dynamics of Attitudes by Age Group.
Answered: "No," %*



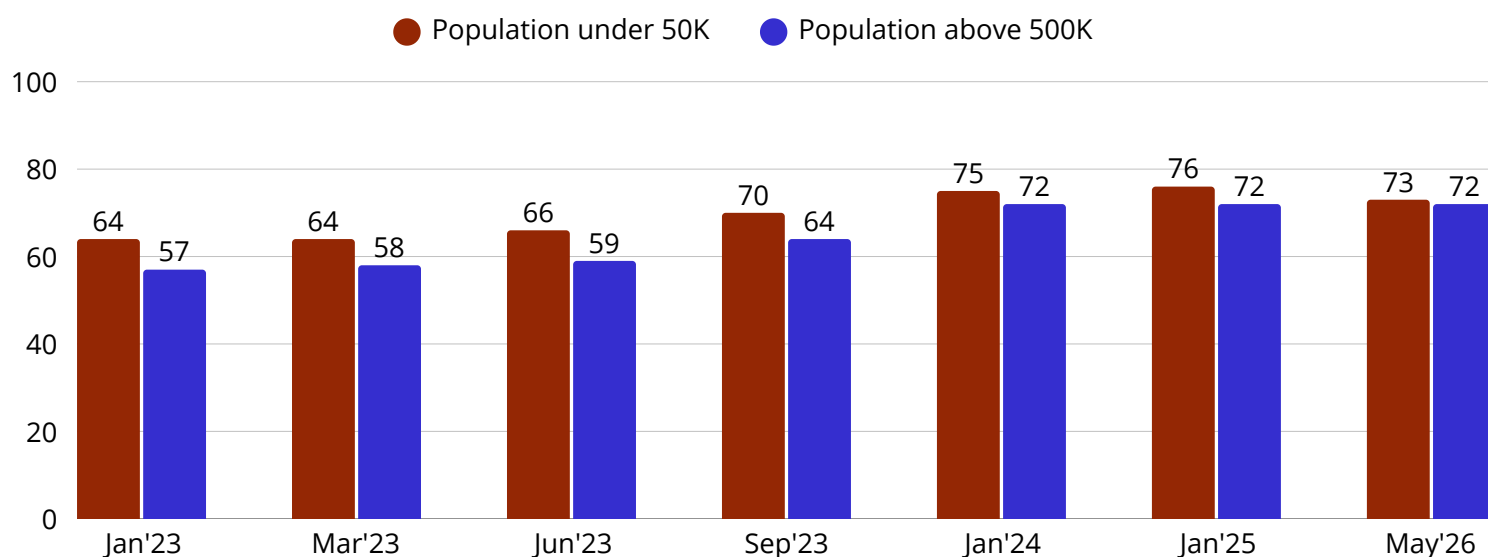
MOBILIZATION SENTIMENTS

Another important factor shaping attitudes toward mobilization was the type of settlement where people lived. In early 2023, residents of large cities with more than 500,000 people and residents of small towns with fewer than 50,000 people and rural areas showed clear differences in their attitudes toward mobilization: opposition was higher among urban residents than among people living in rural areas. This difference was likely linked to differences in education and income. As a result, residents of villages and small towns became the main target group for mobilization efforts in autumn 2022 and for subsequent campaigns to encourage contract service between 2023 and 2026.

For the same reasons, as well as the high concentration of population in large cities and greater social media activity, residents of cities with more than 500,000 people were mobilized at comparatively lower rates.

DYNAMICS OF SUPPORT FOR MASS MOBILIZATION IN RUSSIA BY SETTLEMENT TYPE: 2022-2026

Should Another Wave of Partial Mobilization Be Carried Out? — Dynamics of Attitudes by Settlement.
Answered: "No," %



MOBILIZATION SENTIMENTS

Over time, however, the duration of the war, the scale of recruitment in small towns and rural areas, and the disproportionately high number of casualties among their residents gradually narrowed this gap. By 2026, the share of people opposing mobilization in these areas had effectively reached the same level as among urban residents, at 72%.

Thus, even among groups such as older people and residents of small towns and rural areas, who are more likely to form part of Vladimir Putin's core electorate, opposition to a new mobilization is approaching three-quarters. The level of opposition is even higher among groups that are more problematic for the authorities, such as young people and residents of large cities. These are also the groups that would logically need to play a much larger role in any new mass mobilization. Why, then, does the Russian military and political leadership face such a strong negative reaction to a possible new mobilization?



MOBILIZATION SENTIMENTS

The main factor shaping public attitudes is whether mobilization takes place when there is no clear strategic success on the battlefield. Russians see that even limited advances come with heavy losses of personnel rather than clear evidence of technological superiority or effective military command. In other words, support for mobilization is lower when people do not see Russia clearly winning the war or moving toward a near-term victory. The situation was different in early 2025, when many Russians expected the active phase of the war to end soon because they believed Donald Trump could reach an agreement with Vladimir Putin. During that period, the number of people voluntarily signing military contracts increased temporarily.

This points to another problem in how Russians view possible mass mobilization: there is no clear end date for military service. Russians see that those mobilized in 2022 are still fighting, have been killed, or have suffered serious injuries before returning to civilian life. Desertion is another option, but it can lead to long prison sentences. At the beginning of Donald Trump's term, some Russians signed contracts because they expected the war to end soon and believed that the risk of either being killed or spending years in the military was relatively low.

MOBILIZATION SENTIMENTS

Finally, Russians do not have a clear picture of what victory would look like. Z-activists and military bloggers acknowledge this directly, while officials and propagandists indirectly confirm it when asked what a Russian victory would mean and refer instead to the undefined “goals of the special military operation” or to what “our president has outlined.” This uncertainty makes long-term planning more difficult and increases public anxiety. If there is no clear picture of victory or defined end goals, the war appears likely to continue indefinitely, expanding not only in time but also in geography and in the resources it requires. Under these conditions, mobilization would signal that the supposedly limited “special military operation” has long ceased to be limited and that the war has effectively lost both its temporal and geographical boundaries. It would also suggest that the authorities lack a clear long-term strategy and that the military command cannot achieve success through professional competence alone, but increasingly relies on the continued commitment of personnel to the battlefield.



MOBILIZATION SENTIMENTS

1.4 THE 2022 MOBILIZATION AS A TURNING POINT IN RUSSIAN PUBLIC ATTITUDES

The September 2022 mobilization became one of the most socially sensitive decisions in Russia during the war. Until then, military personnel, contract soldiers, and volunteers had borne most of the war's direct costs.

After the announcement, the prospect of direct involvement in combat began to affect a much broader segment of the population. Public anxiety and demand for information increased, willingness to participate in protests grew, and personal involvement in the war became a much more important issue than during the first months of the full-scale invasion.

The protests that followed the mobilization announcement in September 2022 created an important political precedent. More than 1,300 people were detained across the country within the first 24 hours. By October 10, the number of detentions doubled. One of the most significant protests took place in Dagestan, where anxiety over conscription escalated into mass demonstrations, road blockades, and clashes with police. The protests led to further detentions and criminal cases.

The demonstrations took place under intense state pressure. By September 2022, the authorities had sharply restricted opportunities for public anti-war protest. Detentions, administrative charges, and the threat of criminal prosecution made participation more risky, even in peaceful gatherings. In the following years, the authorities increasingly relied on preventive measures to maintain control.

The 2022 mobilization showed how sensitive public attitudes toward the war remained when its social costs increased directly. Against this backdrop, efforts to shape and reinforce specific interpretations of the conflict became particularly important. These efforts include historical narratives, the education system, the glorification of military service, and restrictions on alternative views. Together, these measures create a broader environment in which military propaganda increasingly works through socialization and everyday military practices.

MOBILIZATION AGENDA ACROSS RUSSIA'S STATE AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

After February 2022, Russia's system of patriotic education became increasingly integrated with the official interpretation of the war against Ukraine. Existing practices, including cadet and Cossack classes, "lessons of courage," military-sports events, commemorative activities, and the symbolism of the Great Patriotic War acquired new political content. The war became directly linked to the themes of "denazification," the defense of Donbas, confrontation with NATO, and historical continuity with the victory of 1945.

By 2025–2026, military themes were incorporated into virtually all levels of socialization, from kindergartens and schools to youth organizations, textbooks, and state programs. "Conversations About Important Things," meetings with military personnel, the activities of Yunarmiya, thematic campaigns, and a unified state-approved series of textbooks create a stable environment in which official narratives about the war are regularly reproduced. As a result, support for the army, the glorification of military service, and the state's interpretation of the conflict are gradually consolidated as elements of normative patriotic behavior.

At its core, this system rests on several interconnected narratives: the modern army continues the "heroic deeds of the grandfathers"; the Ukrainian state is described through the theme of "Nazism"; the war is interpreted as a confrontation between Russia and NATO and the "collective West"; and the serviceman becomes one of the central models of public heroism. Taken together, these constructs form a simplified and emotionally resilient worldview in which the war is presented as defensive and historically justified, while support for the military is associated with patriotism and civic loyalty.

SOCIETY MILITARIZATION

2.1 FROM MILITARY PROPAGANDA TO MILITARY-PATRIOTIC SOCIALIZATION



After February 2022, Russian propaganda increasingly used the existing patriotic-education system. This system already included cadet and Cossack classes, “lessons of courage,” military-sports games, commemorative events, and symbols associated with the Second World War.

The main change concerned their political content. Practices that had previously focused on historical memory and a general sense of patriotic identity became directly connected to the ongoing war. Public messaging increasingly relied on arguments such as “denazification,” the defense of Donbas, and confrontation with NATO.

The war then gradually entered school curricula, state-approved textbooks, the “Conversations About Important Things” program, meetings with military personnel, and large public campaigns supporting the armed forces. Through these channels, the education system helps shape basic ideas about what is normal, what constitutes heroism and patriotism, who the enemy is, and which forms of civic behavior are acceptable.

By 2025–2026, this process reached preschools as well.

At Kindergarten No. 238 in Rostov-on-Don, for example, staff took children outside during a daytime walk in temperatures of -13°C to record a message for Apti Alaudinov, commander of the Chechen special forces unit Akhmat.

SOCIETY MILITARIZATION

Children of this age have little capacity to critically assess the causes or consequences of war. Instead, they absorb a simple normative framework: the soldier is a hero, supporting the soldier is the right thing to do, and participating in collective displays of support is a social norm.

It is therefore no longer sufficient to speak only of propaganda surrounding Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Over the course of the conflict, a longer-term process has emerged – the militarization of socialization. Military themes increasingly shape how children and young people understand patriotism, heroism, and normal civic behavior.

However, individual advocacy campaigns cannot sustain this model on their own. It depends on a continuous institutional system that encompasses people at different stages of socialization, from preschool and school to youth organizations and public life in general.



SOCIETY MILITARIZATION

2.2 INFRASTRUCTURE OF DISSEMINATION: MAKING WAR PART OF EVERYDAY LIFE

The shift from short-term propaganda campaigns to long-term institutionalized socialization became possible as schools and youth organizations incorporated military themes into their everyday activities. The system operates through multiple channels, including preschools, schools, textbooks, official ceremonies, youth organizations, and commemorative practices.

At the preschool level, children write letters and messages to soldiers, make gifts, collect aid, and participate in themed events. In 2024 alone, preschools held around 19,000 activities directly related to the war and the “special military operation.”

Schools use a much wider range of practices. Since September 2022, they have held regular “Conversations About Important Things” classes. These lessons combine patriotism, service to the state, historical memory, the Second World War, and stories about Russian soldiers in the current war. Repetition is as important as the content itself.

Yunarmiya, cadet and Cossack classes, meetings with war participants, and military-patriotic events add another layer. Children therefore encounter the same symbols, narratives, and practices again and again. Over time, this repetition turns political messages into part of the everyday norm.

History classes provide another important channel. School textbooks present the official Russian account of the Russian-Ukrainian war systematically. A new history textbook for 11th grade, introduced in 2023, includes sections on “Ukrainian neo-Nazism” and the official Russian interpretation of the war.

SOCIETY MILITARIZATION

In 2023–2024, the official state version of the war against Ukraine appeared mainly in high school textbooks. Starting from the following school year, a single series of state history textbooks for grades 5–11 was published, while school curricula began to pay more attention to the history of Russia. With the beginning of the 2026 school year, this approach is gaining general educational distribution.

This does not mean that every textbook chapter functions as war propaganda. The key issue is the standardization mechanism itself. It gives the state greater control over the version of history taught in schools. The official Presidential Library describes the new textbooks as part of state education policy “in the conditions of information warfare.”

Military themes are also becoming more embedded in higher education. In August 2026, the Russian State Social University added “Fundamentals of Military Training” and “Heroes of Our Time – Unmanned Systems Troops” to the mandatory curriculum for first-year medical students. The change reflects a broader expansion of military-related content beyond schools and into universities, where formal coursework increasingly overlaps with career guidance and recruitment initiatives.

Another important step is to expand patriotic education beyond individual curricula. In October 2025, the Russian government approved a set of measures on patriotic and spiritual-moral education for young people through 2028. The agencies responsible include the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, the Ministry of Defense, the National Guard, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Federal Security Service, Rosmolodezh, and other state bodies. The plan also calls for statistical monitoring of patriotic education.

The Strategy of State National Policy through 2036, approved in November 2025, adds another layer. It identifies the development of civic identity and patriotism among children and young people as a separate state objective throughout the education process.

The infrastructure alone, however, does not determine the content of this policy. For the system to work consistently, it also needs a shared set of ideas about who the enemy is, how to explain the war, and whom to portray as a hero.



SOCIETY MILITARIZATION

2.3 FOUR CORE NARRATIVES: EXPLAINING WAR THROUGH A SIMPLE WORLDVIEW

Russian war propaganda after 2022 relies on four closely connected narratives. Their strength does not come from complex arguments. Instead, they bring different events together into a simple and emotionally clear picture of the world.

The first narrative rests on the idea that **“we are repeating the heroic deeds of our grandfathers.”** It places the modern Russian soldier in the same historical line as the Red Army soldier and gives the current war some of the moral authority associated with the victory of 1945.

The second narrative claims that **“Nazis seized power in Ukraine.”** This argument takes the existence of far-right groups in Ukraine and uses it to portray the Ukrainian state and political system as a whole in those terms.

The third narrative presents the **war as a confrontation between Russia, NATO, and the “collective West.”** It starts from the real fact of large-scale Western support for Ukraine but turns this into the broader claim that Russia is effectively at war with the entire Western bloc. This narrative helps explain the length of the war, the scale of spending, and the absence of a quick victory.

SOCIETY MILITARIZATION

The fourth narrative presents the **soldier as the main hero of modern Russia**. Active-duty personnel and veterans appear at official ceremonies, school events, and commemorative activities. These appearances present service to the state as a socially valued model of behavior.

Together, these narratives create a single worldview. Russia once again faces a historic enemy, the war appears defensive, the army continues the mission of earlier generations, and support for soldiers becomes closely linked to patriotism.

The memory of the Second World War gives this framework much of its emotional force. The war remains central to Russian historical policy and to the political myths that support it.



SOCIETY MILITARIZATION

2.4 THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR AS THE MAIN MECHANISM OF LEGITIMATION

Memory of the Great Patriotic War occupies a central place in Russia's model for legitimizing the current conflict. Its political and propagandistic effectiveness comes from the exceptional moral status of the victory over Nazism. By transferring the categories of 1941–45 to the present, Russian propaganda can frame the current conflict through a familiar and morally unambiguous lens.

On February 24, 2022, the authorities explicitly used this framework through the stated goal of Ukraine's "denazification." The term links the current war to familiar historical images: a Nazi enemy, the defense of the state, a moral duty to resist, and the serviceman as the heir to the generation of victors.

The propagandistic function does not lie in creating the memory of the Second World War itself. It lies in transferring its moral judgments to the current war and presenting two fundamentally different conflicts as morally connected. Historical complexity gives way to a simple and emotionally comprehensible narrative: an external enemy poses an existential threat to the country, confronting that enemy requires heroism and sacrifice, and victory becomes the natural outcome.

The authorities reinforce this framework with the narrative of a permanent threat from the West. The current confrontation appears as a continuation of Russia's historical struggle against external pressure. Facts that fit poorly within this construction disappear from view, including the Soviet Union's alliance with Britain and the United States during the Second World War, as well as its earlier alliance with Nazi Germany.

SOCIETY MILITARIZATION

After 2022, this logic appeared increasingly often in messages surrounding 9 May. Victory Day retains its commemorative function, but it also gives the current war the moral capital of the 1945 victory.

Historical memory therefore becomes a bridge between past and present. But explaining the war is not enough to ensure the system's long-term durability. The next step is to make military service and participation in the defense sector prestigious and socially approved life choices.



SOCIETY MILITARIZATION

2.5 FROM SYMBOLIC SUPPORT TO MILITARY SOCIALIZATION AND RECRUITMENT

If the historical narrative explains why the war should be seen as just, the next level defines the role citizens should play within that worldview. Military socialization therefore moves beyond symbolic and formal support for service members.

In the educational environment, exposure to military equipment and military-applied disciplines is expanding. Organizations such as Yunarmiya, cadet and Cossack structures are active, and military-sports events take place regularly. Participants in the current war meet with schoolchildren and, in some cases, become involved in educational institutions.

As a result, historical memory becomes linked to patriotism, patriotism to the image of the serviceman as a hero, and the glorification of the military to practical exposure to the military sphere. At the final stage of this process, military service begins to appear not as an exceptional activity associated with wartime, but as a socially approved and prestigious form of service to the state.

For adults, the same system has a material dimension. After the 2022 mobilization, Russian regions substantially increased payments for signing military contracts. Public recruitment messaging combines financial incentives with moral appeals. Monetary payments, social guarantees, and benefits come with calls to defend the Motherland, demonstrate heroism, and follow the example of previous generations.

This creates a two-component recruitment model. Economic incentives make military service more materially attractive, while the ideological narrative gives the decision a moral meaning. One mechanism answers the question, “What will I gain?” The other answers, “Why does my choice deserve respect?”

The long-term stability of this system depends on one further condition. Alongside the continual reproduction of a preferred worldview, the state must manage public responses to its contradictions, including unlawful mobilization, casualties, social anxiety, and alternative interpretations of the war. At this level, propaganda becomes closely intertwined with repression and information control.



SOCIETY MILITARIZATION

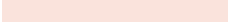
2.6 INSTITUTIONALIZATION: MANAGING DISCONTENT, REPRESSION, AND CENSORSHIP

As the war continues, the system expands beyond the production of pro-war narratives. By 2026, its resilience increasingly rested on three elements: the **military socialization of younger generations, the management of public discontent, and restrictions on alternative sources of information.**

The September 2022 mobilization exposed the vulnerability of this structure. As long as the war remained relatively distant from everyday life, a significant part of society could remain politically passive. Once its costs began to affect families directly, anxiety, demand for alternative information, and willingness to engage in collective action increased sharply.

The state response combined repression with the management of how people interpreted discontent. In Dagestan, regional authorities attributed mass protests to external forces. This allowed them to frame an internal social conflict as part of a broader outside threat. At the same time, the All-Russian Popular Front (ONF) created communication channels allowing citizens to appeal individual mobilization decisions, but not questioning the mobilization policy itself.

SOCIETY MILITARIZATION



The authorities also reinforced this approach with information censorship. As early as February–March 2022, media outlets had to rely on official sources when covering the war. The state introduced laws criminalizing the “discrediting” of Russia’s armed forces and the dissemination of “knowingly false information.” It then blocked independent media on a large scale.

Control later expanded across the information chain. It covered digital platforms, VPN services, funding for independent outlets, and certain forms of searching for prohibited materials. At the same time, self-censorship became increasingly widespread. Journalists and citizens began to limit what they published or discussed based on their assessment of potential legal risks.

The result is an asymmetric system. The state narrative benefits from extensive infrastructure for reproduction, while alternative discourse faces legal, technical, and professional barriers. The model is therefore no longer simply one of wartime propaganda. It combines militarized socialization, managed discontent, and preventive information control. Its purpose is not necessarily to eliminate dissent entirely. Rather, it reduces the likelihood that individual dissatisfaction will develop into a sustained alternative interpretation and collective action.

EVOLVING APPROACHES TO MILITARY RECRUITMENT: 2022–2026

After the weaknesses exposed by the 2022 partial mobilization, Russia shifted toward a more centralized and digitally integrated recruitment system. The Unified Military Register, electronic summonses, automated restrictions, interagency data-sharing, and continuously updated records made it easier to identify, notify, and restrict persons liable for military service. By 2026, these measures increased the state's administrative readiness for selective mobilization without necessarily indicating preparations for another mass call-up.

At the same time, Russia expanded alternative manpower sources to avoid another politically visible mobilization campaign. Prisoner recruitment moved from Wagner to the Ministry of Defense and became embedded in permanent legislation, while continuous contract recruitment relied on federal and regional payments, debt cancellation, benefits, and intermediaries. The sharp rise in regional signing bonuses by 2026 indicated that attracting new servicemen was becoming increasingly expensive.

By late 2025 and 2026, financial incentives alone appeared less effective. Contract signings declined despite higher payments, while authorities increasingly targeted prisoners, debtors, migrants, students, former conscripts, and other vulnerable groups through administrative channels. Recruitment therefore shifted toward a mixed model combining financial incentives, broader recruitment networks, and targeted pressure, while high battlefield losses raised doubts about whether recruitment could produce a sufficient net increase in personnel.

MOBILIZATION DEVELOPMENTS

3.1 THE 2022 MOBILIZATION EXPERIENCE AND A NEW RECRUITMENT MODEL

The experience of partial mobilization in 2022 exposed major weaknesses in Russia's military-registration system. The accelerated call-up produced reports of outdated records, erroneous summonses, and the mobilization of people who did not meet the stated criteria. The public announcement of mobilization also prompted a significant number of draft-eligible men to leave Russia.

After 2022, the authorities focused mainly on keeping military-registration records up to date, integrating them across government agencies, and reducing military commissariats' reliance on paper records and citizens' in-person attendance. The first major change came with Federal Law No. 127-FL of April 14, 2023. The law created the legal basis for a **Unified Military Register** and a **Summons Register**.

Under the law, military-registration records are generated automatically from government databases and information provided by public authorities, organizations, and citizens. Government Resolution No. 506 of April 2024 defined the system's technical architecture. It also established electronic summonses, delivery-status records, and the automated application of certain temporary restrictions.

If another legal method cannot deliver a summons, the system treats it as delivered seven days after it appears in the Summons Register. If a person does not appear without a valid reason, further restrictions may apply after 20 days. These can include restrictions on property transactions, vehicle registration, driving, and access to credit. Administrative pressure is therefore increasingly linked to a person's digital status.

A second direction is the **continuous updating of records**. Employers must report the hiring or dismissal of employees subject to military registration within five days. Government databases can also update registration records without requiring a person to appear in advance. This reduces the likelihood of a situation like the one seen in 2022, when a person's actual place of work or residence differed from the information held by the military office.



MOBILIZATION DEVELOPMENTS

Separate provisions strengthened information-sharing with the Ministry of Internal Affairs regarding newly naturalized Russian citizens. This reduces the time between acquiring citizenship and entering the relevant military-registration system.

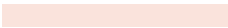
A third change is the **expansion of year-round conscription infrastructure**. Federal Law No. 412-FL provides that, from January 1, 2026, Russia will conduct conscription for citizens not in the reserve throughout the year, from January 1 to December 31. For most conscripts, however, the military will continue to send them to service locations during two annual periods. This reform concerns compulsory military service rather than mobilization, but it allows draft commissions and related administrative procedures to operate continuously.

A further step is the proposed creation of administrative liability for failing to comply with qualifying decisions of regional heads or operational headquarters. Draft Law No. 1322096-8, submitted to the State Duma in August 2026, would allow fines of up to RUB 1 million for legal entities, with penalties also applying to individuals and officials. Although it does not create a separate offence for mobilization evasion or military-registration violations, it would add another enforcement mechanism within the broader framework governing mobilization-related measures. Its practical scope would depend on the legal basis and content of specific decisions, and the bill remained under consideration as of August, 22 2026.

Digital migration-control infrastructure is also developing. It includes biometric tools and experimental geolocation monitoring of some foreign nationals. The state did not create this system as a mobilization mechanism, but it may increase migrants' vulnerability to recruitment and administrative pressure.

On September 1, 2025, Moscow and Moscow Oblast launched an experiment involving additional digital registration for certain foreign citizens under Federal Law No. 121-FL. The program is scheduled to continue until September 2029.

MOBILIZATION DEVELOPMENTS



Participants of the experiment use a dedicated mobile application, provide information about their actual location, and allow the processing of data that may include mobile-device and geolocation information. Extended gaps in geolocation data can affect a participant's migration status under the law.

The logical extension of this model is infrastructure that can link a person's digital identity, the device they use, and data held in government information systems within a single administrative framework.

In June 2026, the authorities adopted a law creating a **state IMEI register** for unique mobile-device identifiers. The system provides for telecom operators and authorized agencies to transfer relevant data and record links between specific devices and SIM cards they use.

At the same time, the authorities are expanding the **integration of digital services with government information systems**. MAX's privacy policy, for example, provides for the processing of technical data that may in some cases include a device's location. The service itself also connects to a range of state digital functions.

In practical terms, the state is building a system that can identify an individual through personal data, link that person to a mobile device, potentially locate them through digital means, and match them against information in government databases.

Between 2023 and 2026, the Russian authorities therefore substantially increased their administrative readiness for selective mobilization measures.

These developments do not show that the government plans another wave of mass mobilization. They do, however, show how the authorities adapted the system after 2022. Digital military registration and summonses, interagency data-sharing, and automated restrictions reduce the time required to identify persons liable for military service, notify them, restrict their ability to leave the country, and manage their interaction with military commissariats.



MOBILIZATION DEVELOPMENTS

3.2 PRISONERS AS A MANPOWER RESERVE: FROM WAGNER TO A STATE-RUN SYSTEM

Since 2023, the Russian state has moved prisoner recruitment for the war from Wagner's exceptional and largely opaque system to a formal mechanism run by the Ministry of Defense. The government developed this channel to sustain troop numbers without another large public mobilization and to expand the pool of people eligible for military contracts.

Wagner began large-scale recruitment in penal colonies in 2022. Recruiters offered prisoners combat service and the prospect of an individual presidential pardon after a fixed term.

Later, when Wagner stopped recruiting prisoners in February 2023, the Ministry of Defense took over. In June, Federal Law No. 269-FL allowed people with criminal convictions to sign military contracts, except those convicted of a specified group of offenses. The law also created a special military-registration system for people serving prison terms. A related law, No. 270-FL, linked final release and expungement of a conviction to conditions such as receiving a state award or leaving service on grounds set by law. The state therefore made prisoner recruitment part of its military staffing system.

MOBILIZATION DEVELOPMENTS

From February through September 2023, the Ministry of Defense sent most convicted recruits to units known as Storm Z. It often enrolled them through “written consent” or other arrangements with the ministry rather than standard military contracts.

Beginning in autumn 2023, the system moved to a new model known as “Storm V.” Under the previous arrangement, the main incentive was a presidential pardon and return home after roughly six months of service. According the new model, recruits formally became contract servicemen and no longer received a guaranteed pardon after a short period.

Because the decree on partial mobilization remained in force, contract terms effectively extended beyond the initial period. Service could continue until a legally recognized ground for discharge arose. This change made the new offer significantly less attractive to prisoners.

In 2024, the state incorporated this temporary arrangement into the Criminal Code and Criminal Procedure Code. Laws adopted in March and October allowed certain suspects, accused persons, and defendants to sign military contracts, pause criminal cases, and later obtain release from criminal liability or expungement of their convictions. The government repealed Law No. 270-FL and moved its mechanism into permanent provisions of these codes. Military service could now replace not only the remaining part of a prison sentence but also further criminal prosecution before a final verdict.

The incentives also changed. In 2022 and 2023, recruiters offered prisoners a pardon and release after a clearly defined service term in exchange for combat service, including highly dangerous assignments. From late 2023, the state made release conditional. The law tied the end of criminal consequences to specific prerequisites, while the duration of service became uncertain.

MOBILIZATION DEVELOPMENTS

By 2025–2026, the number of available prisoners had also become a limiting factor. In May 2026, Federal Penitentiary Service head Arkady Gostev said that the prison population had fallen from about 465,000 people at the end of 2021 to 282,000. He cited recruitment for military contracts, alongside changes in criminal-justice practices, as one reason for the decline.

The state therefore faced two constraints: fewer people in prison and a less attractive offer. High mortality, earlier large-scale recruitment, and harsher service terms reduced the pool of potential recruits. By 2024, many prisoners already viewed Storm V conditions as less attractive.

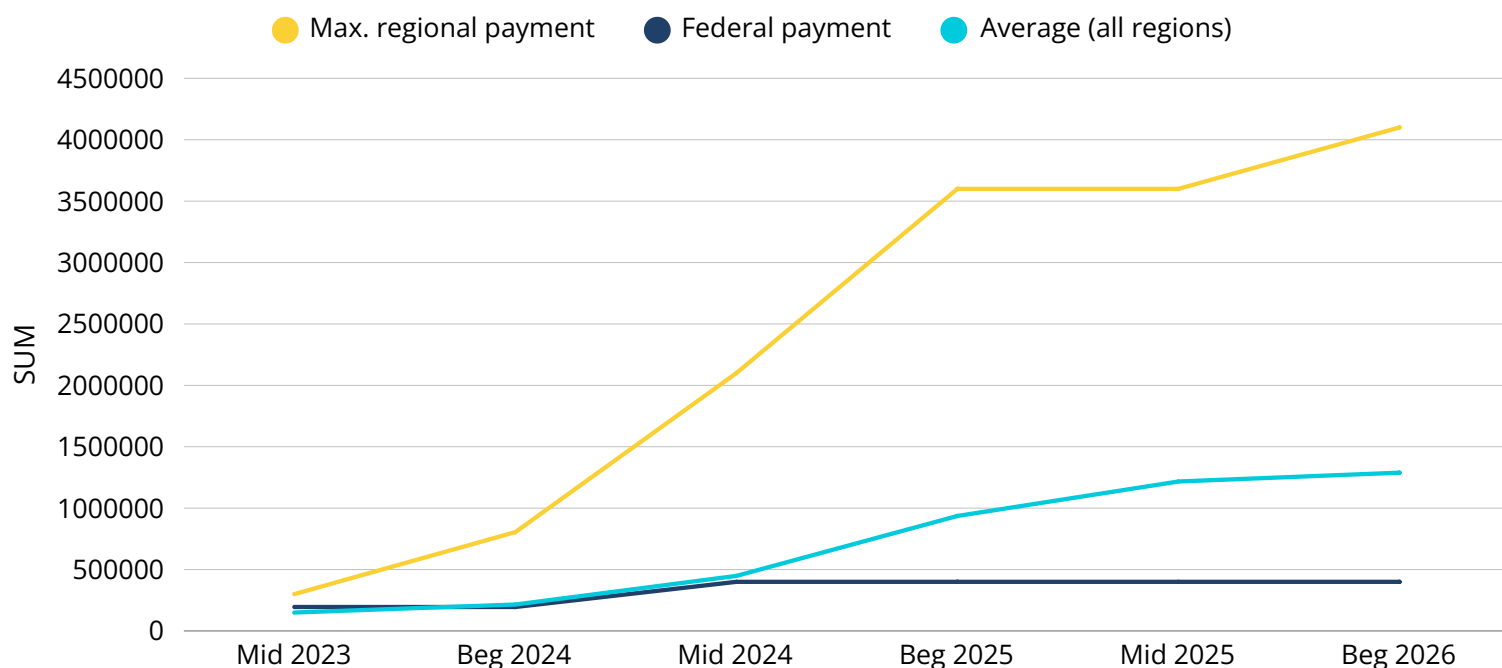
The status of surviving Storm Z participants remained unclear, however. On October 27, 2025, Federal Law No. 387-FL retroactively granted combat-veteran status to people who had agreements or other legal arrangements with the Ministry of Defense and served in special units between October 2022 and September 2023. The law classified participants with relevant injuries or illnesses as disabled combat veterans. In March 2026, the government established the procedure for issuing their veteran identification documents.

In 2026, lawmakers continued to expand the legal basis for prisoner recruitment. In July, the State Duma approved a further reduction in the list of offenses that bar people from signing military contracts, including some offenses connected to banditry and organized crime.

By 2026, prisoner recruitment was no longer a temporary replacement for Wagner's practice. The state had turned it into a permanent, legally regulated channel for replenishing the armed forces. It now links the prison system, criminal justice, and military service.

The use of prisoners as a manpower resource has precedents not only in the history of regular armed forces but also in the practices of armed and terrorist organizations, including ISIS. The Russian model that developed between 2022 and 2026 is distinct in one fundamental respect. It is a state-formalized mechanism that legally links military service, under certain conditions, to release from punishment or exemption from criminal liability.

DYNAMICS OF REGIONAL PAYMENTS FOR SIGNING A CONTRACT WITH THE RUSSIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE



NOTE: PAYMENTS ARE ONE-TIME CONTRACT-SIGNING BONUSES, IN RUB. REGIONAL AVERAGES ARE CALCULATED FROM AVAILABLE REGIONAL DATA; THE NUMBER OF REGIONS INCLUDED VARIES BY PERIOD. MUNICIPAL AND OTHER LOCAL PAYMENTS MAY NOT BE INCLUDED.

3.3 THE “MERCENARY” MODEL OF RUSSIAN MILITARY RECRUITMENT: RISING COSTS AND THE LIMITS OF CONTRACT ENLISTMENT

Russia's recruitment system is becoming more digital, costly, and coercive as financial incentives lose effectiveness and battlefield losses remain high.

6X

the increase in the average regional contract-signing payment since the model introduction

Following the partial mobilization of September 2022, the Russian authorities did not launch another openly declared mobilization campaign on a comparable scale.

Instead, they relied mainly on continuous contract recruitment. The model combines financial payments, regional programs, social benefits, and a gradually expanding system of administrative recruitment.

MOBILIZATION DEVELOPMENTS

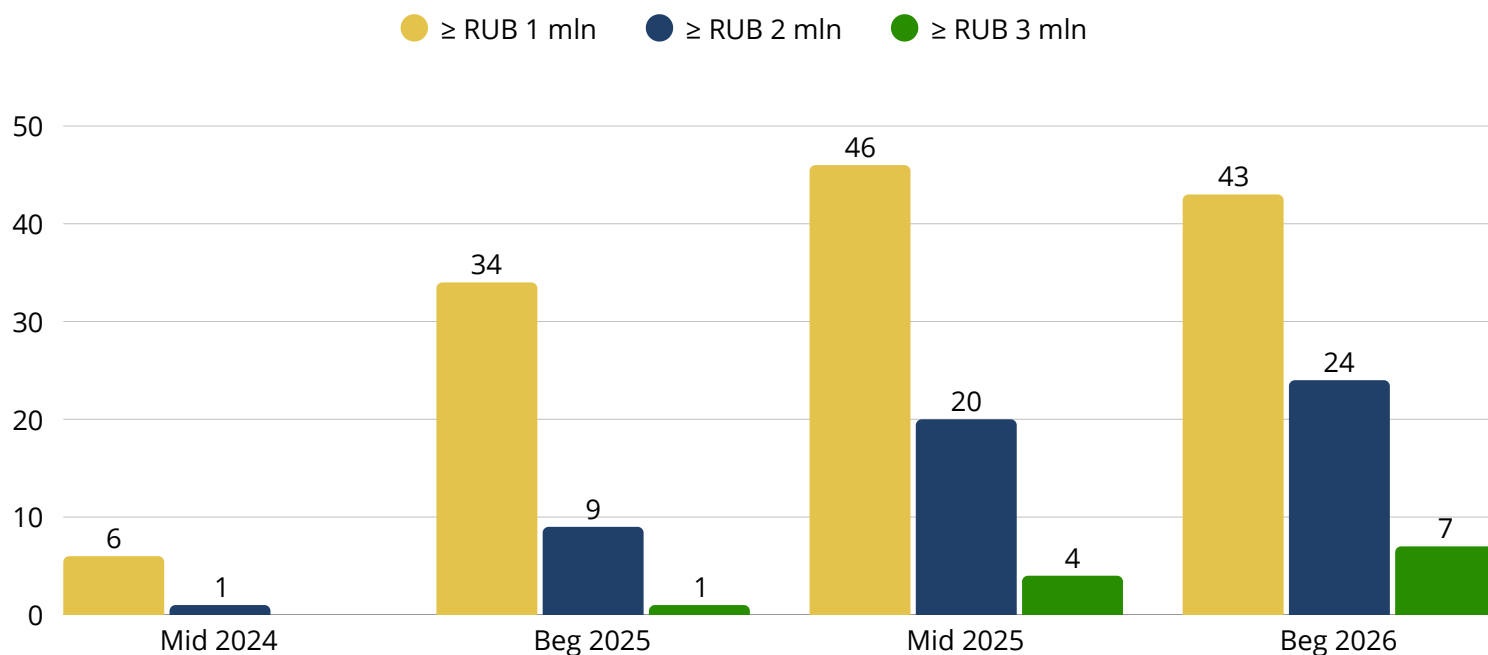
This approach spreads recruitment over time and across regions. It also reduces its political visibility compared with the mobilization campaign of autumn 2022. In 2023–2024, financial incentives became a central element of this model. The federal one-time payment initially amounted to RUB 195,000. In August 2024, the government increased it to RUB 400,000. Government regulations established the payment for contracts of at least one year concluded for participation in the war.

The state also introduced a loan-debt cancellation mechanism. From May 1, 2026, citizens who sign contracts of at least one year for participation in the war and their spouses may cancel credit obligations of up to RUB 10 million. The debt must have been confirmed before that date by a final court ruling, enforcement document, or enforcement proceeding. The state cancels the obligation from the date the person signs the contract.

Regional authorities increased payments much more sharply. A compiled dataset covering Russia's federal subjects shows that the average regional payment rose from about RUB 215,000 at the start of 2024 to RUB 1.29 million at the start of 2026 — almost a sixfold increase.

The number of regions offering at least RUB 1 million also rose rapidly. In mid-2024, 6 of 83 regions with available data offered at least RUB 1 million. By mid-2025, 46 of 89 regions offered that amount, and 20 offered at least RUB 2 million. By early 2026, 24 regions offered more than RUB 2 million.

THE NUMBER OF REGIONS OFFERING CONTRACT-SIGNING PAYMENTS OF RUB 1 MILLION OR MORE

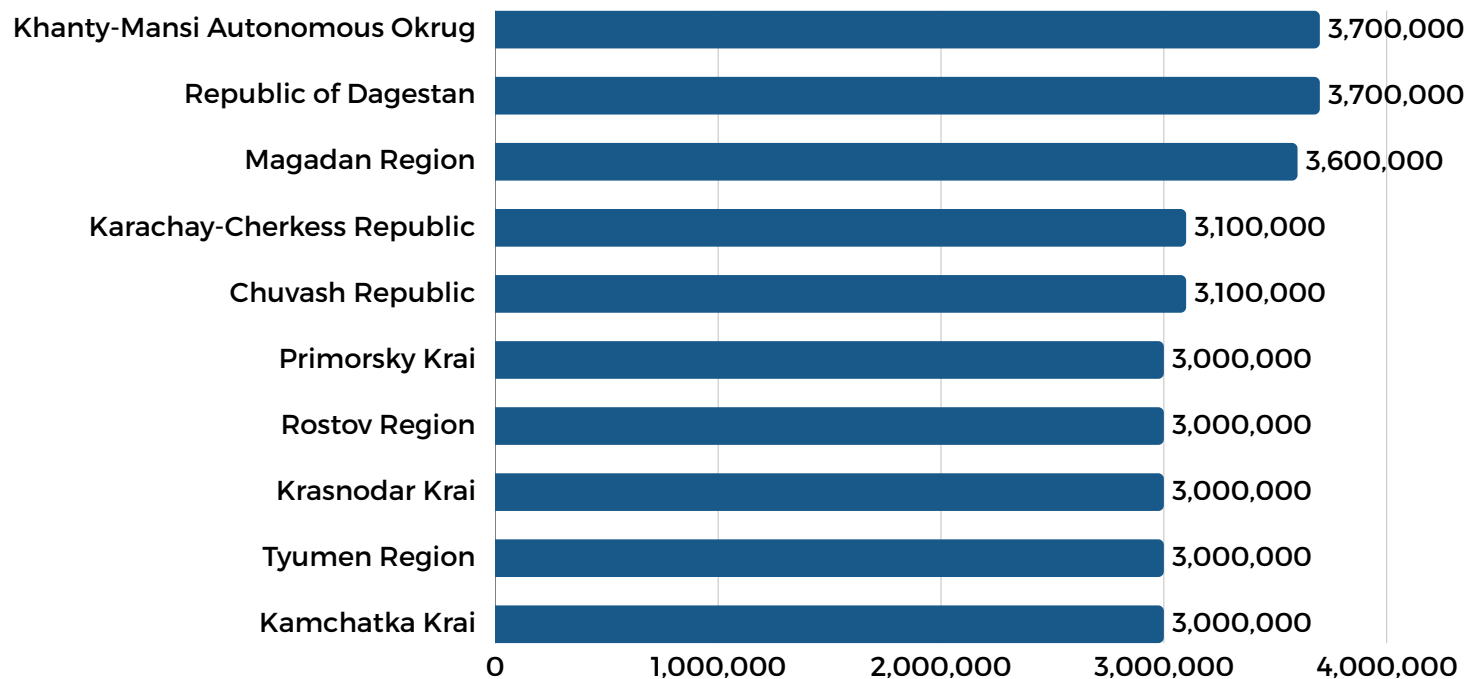


MOBILIZATION DEVELOPMENTS

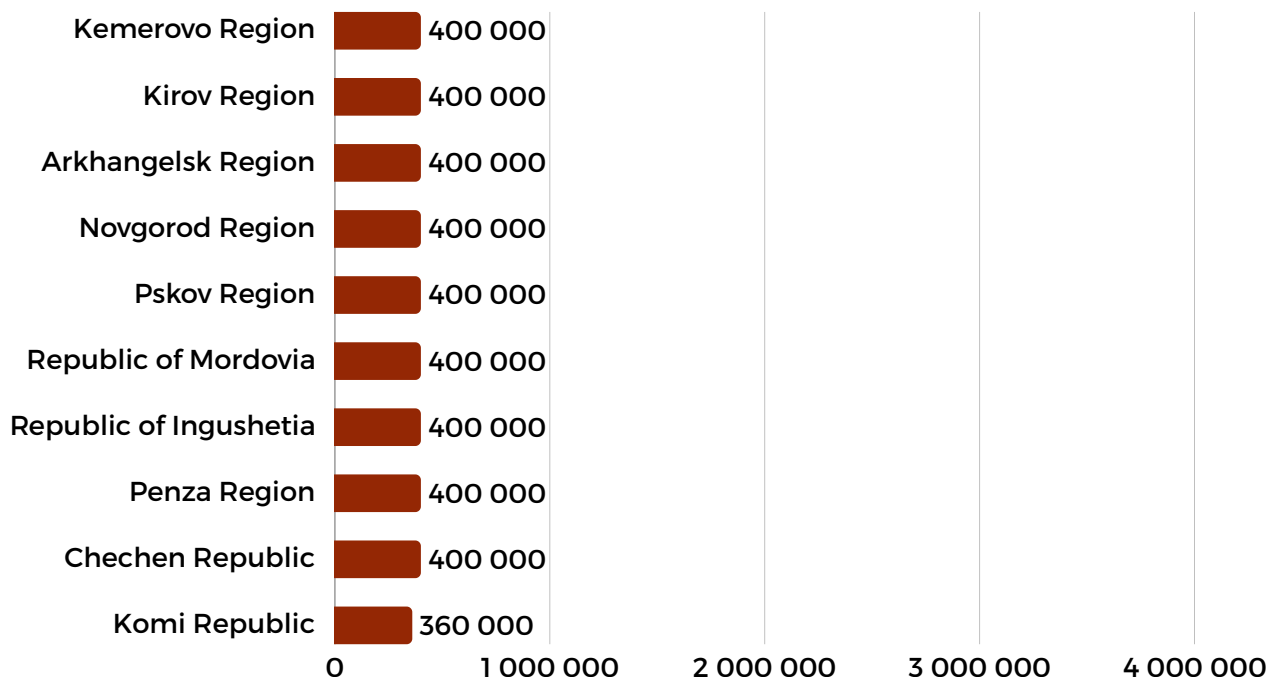
These figures are better understood as indicators of the rising cost of attracting a single contract recruit than as direct measures of manpower shortages. In some cases, higher payments produced a short-term effect. For example, after Tyumen Oblast increased its payment, regional authorities reported that the number of applications had doubled.

At the national level, however, available data do not show a proportional increase in recruitment as one-time signing bonuses rose.

TOP 10 REGIONS WITH THE HIGHEST PAYOUTS (AUGUST 2026)



TOP 10 REGIONS WITH THE LOWEST PAYOUTS (AUGUST 2026)



MOBILIZATION DEVELOPMENTS

3.4 DIMINISHING EFFECTIVENESS OF FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

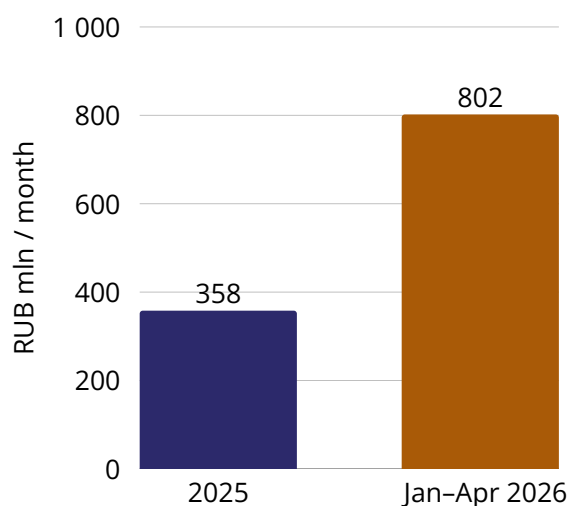
By the end of 2025, signs emerged that Russia's "mercenary" recruitment model was becoming less effective. Estimates based on federal budget payments suggest that about 363,900 people signed contracts in 2025 — roughly 10% fewer than in 2024. During the fourth quarter of 2025, the recruitment rate was about one-third lower than a year earlier. In the first quarter of 2026, 71,200 people received the federal one-time payment, 20% fewer than in the same period of the previous year.

Average estimates for the second quarter suggest a recruitment rate of around 1,000 contracts per day. These figures come from budgetary data rather than official recruitment statistics. Russian authorities cite higher values. On July 28, Dmitry Medvedev stated that approximately 200,000 contracts had been signed in the first half of 2026, with more than 16,000 additional people joining volunteer formations.

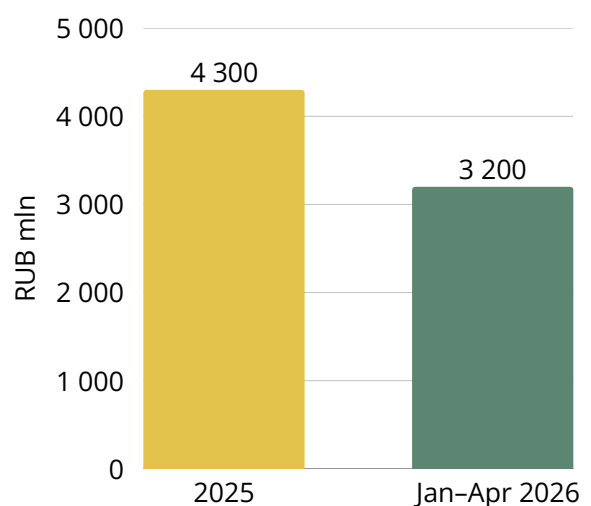
The cost of finding recruits provides another indicator. Average monthly regional spending on recruiter rewards rose from RUB 358 million in 2025 to RUB 802 million in 2026. Regions recorded at least RUB 7.7 billion in these payments in total. By May 2026, about half of Russia's regions offered bonuses to intermediaries. Budgets therefore pay not only for an individual's decision to sign a contract, but also for the system that identifies and recruits potential candidates.

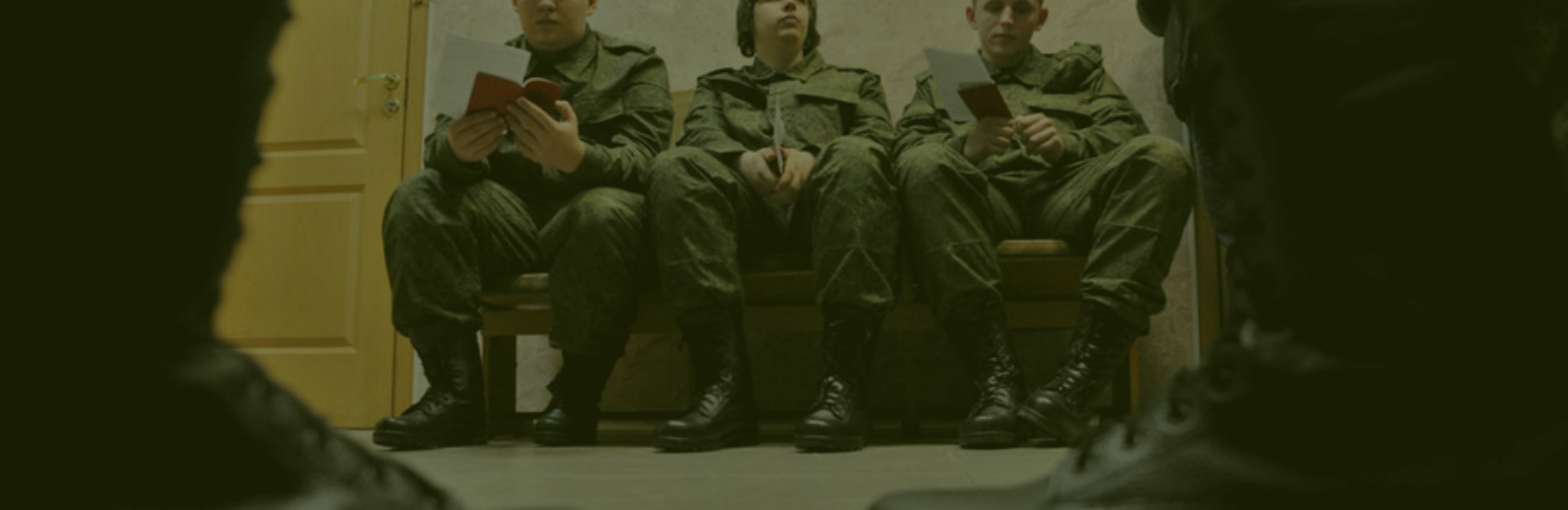
INCREASE IN REGIONAL SPENDING ON INTERMEDIARY RECRUITMENT OF CONTRACT SOLDIERS

Average monthly intermediary spending



Total intermediary spending





MOBILIZATION DEVELOPMENTS

3.5 EXPANDING THE RECRUITMENT BASE

As contract recruitment becomes more expensive, Russian authorities and affiliated organizations are expanding the target groups. They increasingly focus on defendants and convicted prisoners, debtors, recently demobilized conscripts, students, migrants, and other socially vulnerable individuals. Law-enforcement agencies, military commissariats, employers, employment centers, and educational institutions provide access to these groups.

Some regions have reported recruitment quotas, raids, targeted pressure on potential candidates, and efforts to recruit debtors, former prisoners, and students. These cases show that administrative methods play a growing role in contract recruitment. They do not, however, show that coercion operates everywhere in Russia or follows a uniform pattern.

The intensity of these measures depends mainly on the region, the available pool of recruits, and local targets for sending personnel to the war.

Several quantitative indicators reflect this trend: higher spending on recruitment intermediaries, larger regional signing bonuses, and reports of local slowdowns in enlistment. In Moscow, 1,708 people went to the front in April 2026, compared with 1,378 in May. In Lipetsk Oblast, the number of new contract recruits reportedly fell below 50 per day, down from 150–200 previously.

These local figures cannot represent Russia as a whole. However, together with rising payments and a decline in signed contracts, they suggest that financial incentives alone are becoming less effective.

To maintain the flow of personnel, the state increasingly combines monetary incentives with administrative pressure, intermediary recruitment networks, and a broader pool of potential recruits.

MOBILIZATION DEVELOPMENTS

3.6 LOSSES AND THE ABILITY TO REPLENISH PERSONNEL STRENGTH

The ratio of contract recruits to recorded casualties does not, by itself, show how successfully the army replenishes its personnel. Publicly available data also do not allow us to determine accurately what proportion of casualties result from death or injury, how many soldiers return to service, and how many leave the military permanently for other reasons, including capture, desertion, or transfer between units.

Contract recruitment data may also include not only new recruits but contract extensions, volunteers, prisoners, foreigners, and other categories of recruits. In February 2026, reports indicated that Russian forces' total combat losses in January may have exceeded the inflow of new personnel by approximately 9,000 people. Later estimates suggested that a similar balance continued for several subsequent months.

These assessments indicate that, if losses remain high, even substantial contract recruitment may fail to generate a sufficient net increase in personnel strength. This creates several risks. If losses regularly exceed replacements, contract recruitment cannot maintain even the army's existing strength. The authorities would then need to raise payments further, expand recruitment channels, increase administrative pressure, or use more open and coercive forms of mobilization.

In February 2026, reports indicated that Russian forces' total combat losses in January may have exceeded the inflow of new personnel by approximately 9,000 people. Later estimates suggested that a similar balance continued for several subsequent months.

MOBILIZATION DEVELOPMENTS

By 2026, Russia's contract recruitment model was still viable. Recruitment continued at a scale of hundreds of thousands of people per year. However, the state needed significantly higher regional payments, a separate market for intermediary recruitment, and a broader pool of potential candidates to sustain the system.

At the same time, budgetary indicators pointed to a decline in the pace of contract signing compared with earlier periods.

These trends suggest that voluntary recruitment is becoming less effective. Each additional recruit requires larger payments and more intensive recruitment efforts. In other words, the marginal cost of recruiting one additional serviceman is rising, while the system is shifting from predominantly financial incentives toward a combination of payments, administrative infrastructure, and targeted pressure.



EMERGING METHODS AND TECHNIQUES OF MILITARY RECRUITMENT IN 2026

Russia's approach to sustaining the war changed significantly after the 2022 mobilization. What began with wartime propaganda, patriotic messaging, and emergency mobilization gradually developed into a broader system of military socialization and recruitment. Military themes now reach schools, youth organizations, and other public institutions, while historical narratives and restrictions on alternative information reinforce the state's view of the war.

At the same time, Russia built a wider administrative and recruitment system to maintain the flow of military personnel. Digital military registration, electronic summonses, interagency data-sharing, and continuously updated records make it easier to identify and manage people liable for military service. The authorities also expanded contract recruitment, prisoners and foreigners recruitment, and financial incentives, allowing them to draw on a wider pool of potential recruits without another openly declared mass mobilization.

By 2026, this model became more costly and complex. Regional payments reached record levels, while recruitment increasingly involved employers, universities, public institutions, and private intermediaries. Prisoners, migrants, students, debtors, and other groups also became part of the recruitment pool. The emerging system therefore combines financial incentives with military socialization, administrative tools, and targeted recruitment. Rather than relying on one large mobilization campaign, Russia built a system designed to generate military personnel continuously throughout a prolonged war.

NEW APPROACH

By 2026, Russia's contract recruitment system had changed significantly. At first, it relied mainly on selection centers, military commissariats, and substantial payments made directly to contract soldiers. The state, though, has gradually expanded the number of institutions involved in identifying potential recruits.

Regional and municipal authorities, employers, security agencies, educational institutions, and private intermediaries now serve as additional recruitment channels.

The emergence of a referral-based recruitment model is one of the most notable developments. Regions now pay not only the person who signs the contract but also the person or organization that helped recruit them. These programs involve private citizens as well as employees of local administrations, military offices, the Federal Penitentiary Service, police, and other state bodies.

This marks a shift from a model in which candidates seek contracts on their own to one in which identifying potential soldiers becomes a paid service. In some regions, payments vary by candidate category. Recruiters may, for example, receive higher rewards for bringing in a foreign national or a person from another region.



NEW APPROACH

4.1 FOREIGNERS AS A SOURCE OF MANPOWER FOR THE RUSSIAN ARMED FORCES

Russia has gradually turned the recruitment of foreign nationals into an additional source of military manpower. After 2022, the state created a legal framework, financial incentives, and intermediary networks that operate both inside and outside Russia. This channel became more important as the war continued, losses remained high, and domestic contract recruitment became more expensive.

A key feature of this model links military service to Russian citizenship and other migration benefits. Federal Law No. 370-FL, adopted on September 24, 2022, reduced the minimum first-contract term for foreign soldiers, sailors, sergeants, and petty officers from five years to one year. Several days later, Presidential Decree No. 690 created a special citizenship procedure for foreign nationals and stateless people who signed military contracts.

The state later simplified the process further. In May 2023, it removed the requirement that applicants take part in combat for at least six months. Presidential Decree No. 10 of January 4, 2024 allowed foreign nationals with contracts of at least one year to apply for citizenship and created a simplified procedure for their family members. The decree set a one-month decision period, compared with up to three months under the earlier procedure.

A military contract can therefore offer several incentives at once: military pay, federal and regional bonuses, social guarantees, and faster access to citizenship. For eligible contract soldiers, the state reduced or removed general requirements for long-term residence in Russia and prior residence permits.

Recruitment advertising aimed at foreign nationals often emphasizes these incentives. Intermediaries promise fast citizenship and help with documents. Some claim that candidates can receive a Russian passport within 14 days.

NEW APPROACH

Such claims often go beyond the legal framework and sometimes conflict with other advertisements from the same recruiters. Russian law provides a simplified citizenship route, but it does not guarantee a passport within two weeks. For example, Decree No. 10 allows authorities up to one month to consider an application.

The difference between formal legal rules and recruitment promises matters in practice. Foreign candidates often first encounter the offer through intermediaries rather than at a military recruitment center. A single offer may combine state-guaranteed payments, regional bonuses, estimated citizenship timelines, and services from the recruiter. These elements do not have the same legal status. Eligibility for payments and migration procedures depends on the region, the contract date, and the candidate's individual legal status.

The system expanded further in 2025. Presidential Decree No. 821 of November 5, 2025 introduced a temporary procedure for citizenship and residence permits. For certain foreign men aged 18 to 65, the decree links citizenship or residence-permit applications to documents confirming military service, another form of service specified by the decree, or a military medical commission's finding that the applicant was unfit for service.

This measure strengthened the link between migration status and military obligations for the relevant groups.

Recruitment also expanded geographically. Recruiters seek candidates through employment agencies, private intermediaries, personal contacts, social media, and messaging platforms. Reports have identified recruitment offers aimed at citizens of Cuba, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Central Asian states, China, and several African countries.

As early as autumn 2022, Moscow-based advertisements promoted contract service and fast citizenship in Uzbek, Tajik, and Kyrgyz. Foreign nationals could also apply through a recruitment center located at a migration facility.

NEW APPROACH

Intermediaries handle much of the practical work. They distribute recruitment offers, arrange travel to Russia, assist with documents, and connect candidates with military recruitment centers. Some international campaigns market military service as a well-paid job and present Russian citizenship as an additional benefit. This approach helps recruiters reach people who have never lived in Russia.

In some cases, this model may involve abuse. Reports document cases in which foreign citizens accepted civilian job offers but received military contracts after arriving in Russia. In January 2026, for example, Bangladeshi nationals accepted jobs as cleaners or electricians but later underwent military training and went to the combat zone. Their accounts described Russian-language documents, threats, and limited ability to refuse military service.

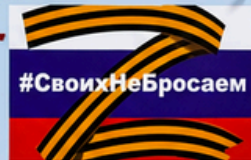
Foreign nationals can legally serve in another country's armed forces. However, deception, threats, document confiscation, or exploitation of a vulnerable or dependent position can change the legal nature of recruitment. In such cases, the conduct may include elements of forced exploitation and human trafficking. The legal classification depends on the specific facts and on whether the person could freely choose to enter or leave the arrangement.

Russian law also provides additional protections for foreign nationals after they enter military service. In 2026, Russia expanded restrictions on extradition and on certain migration measures that apply to serving foreign personnel and some former foreign servicemen. Together with simplified citizenship procedures, these rules create a more durable legal link between foreign servicemen and the Russian state after they sign a contract.

By 2026, Russia established stable legal and organizational structures for recruiting foreign nationals into its armed forces. The model relies on legislative incentives, substantial financial payments, faster migration procedures, recruitment centers, and international intermediaries.

For military manpower generation, this system expands the pool of potential recruits and provides another source of personnel during a prolonged war. Public data do not show the full scale of foreign recruitment. However, the legal framework and recruitment infrastructure indicate that foreign nationals have become an established part of Russia's military recruitment model.

ВЫПУСКНИКИ КОЛЛЕДЖА РОСТГМУ– УЧАСТНИКИ СПЕЦИАЛЬНОЙ ВОЕННОЙ ОПЕРАЦИИ



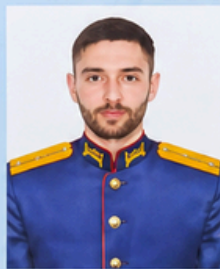
«Есть люди, чьими делами восхищаются, кого помнят, кем гордятся!»
Нравственные качества личности развиваются на примерах не только былинных героев, или героев
прошлого, но и современных патриотов своей Родины, которые живут среди нас



НИКОЛАЙ ЯЦЕНКО
- выпускник 2015 года
специальности
Лечебное дело.
Фельдшер батальона,



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- выпускник 2016 года
специальности
Фармация. Гвардии
сержант, инструктор



АЛЕКСЕЙ ДАНИЛОВ
- выпускник 2018 года
специальности Лечебное
дело. Начальник
медицинского пункта



СВЕТЛАНА БАЙКОВА
- выпускница 2023 года
специальности
Сестринское дело.
Медицинская сестра в СпН



ОЛЕГ МОДКОВСКИЙ
- выпускник 2024
года специальности
Лечебное дело.
Фельдшер



АРТЁМ КИНОЯЛОВ
- выпускник 2024
года специальности
Лечебное дело.
Фельдшер

4.2 INVOLVING EMPLOYERS, UNIVERSITIES, AND TECHNICAL RECRUITMENT

Russia's military recruitment increasingly relies on civilian institutions, with employers helping find candidates and universities targeting technically skilled students through specialized recruitment programs and incentives.

As contract recruitment became more complex, the search for candidates expanded beyond military commissariats and specialized recruitment centers. The state gradually shifted part of this work to organizations that already have regular access to potential candidates, including employers, government institutions, universities, and colleges.

This approach broadens recruitment outreach and allows the state to target predefined population groups.

300

identified universities
and colleges involved
in recruiting for the
needs of SMO

NEW APPROACH

Ryazan Oblast provides a clear example of employer involvement. On March 20, 2026, Governor's Decree No. 17-pg set recruitment targets for businesses, organizations, and institutions in the region, regardless of ownership, for the period from March 20 to September 20, 2026. The targets depended on staff size: organizations with 150–300 employees had to find two candidates; those with 300–500 employees had to find three; and those with 500 or more employees had to find five.

The decree refers to federal orders on measures that Russian regions must take under the current legal regime, as well as a decision by the Ryazan regional operational headquarters on March 11, 2026. The governor retained personal oversight of implementation.

The document does not require candidates to work for the organization that identifies them. Nor does it establish public penalties for failing to meet the target. Still, the mechanism matters because it gives employers a numerical target for finding people for military service. It transfers part of the recruitment process to civilian organizations, including private businesses and state institutions.

This goes beyond ordinary informational support for contract recruitment. Posting advertisements or organizing meetings simply provides information to potential volunteers. Setting a mandatory quota, by contrast, requires an organization to produce a specific result.

The Ryazan example does not establish a nationwide federal quota system for businesses. It does, however, illustrate one method regional authorities can use to meet their own recruitment targets.

Private-sector involvement can also take a less formal form, using civilian job advertisements to channel applicants into military contracting.

In August 2026, around 2,000 Avito advertisements were reported, offering supposed security jobs at Wildberries and Ozon warehouses, including positions in "mobile fire groups" (anti-drone units). The advertisers described the position as a one-year "special contract" with the Ministry of Defence, training in Tula, and a one-time payment of RUB 3.1 million.

NEW APPROACH

Applicants were told they would defend warehouse facilities against drone attacks and would not be sent to fight in Ukraine. However, the enlistment process described by recruiters reportedly matched the standard procedure for signing a Defence Ministry contract. Recruitment-industry sources characterized the civilian vacancies as a cover for contract-soldier recruitment.

Unlike the Ryazan quota system, this mechanism does not impose formal numerical targets on employers. Instead, it uses commercial job platforms and the names of major companies to identify and attract potential recruits outside traditional military recruitment offices.

A similar principle, but in a different form, applies in the education system. Here, recruitment focuses on a specific group of candidates: young people with engineering, IT, and technical skills needed by the newly established Unmanned Systems Forces (USF).

A large university recruitment campaign became visible in early 2026 after Russia created the USF as a separate branch of the armed forces. By early April, monitoring of public sources had identified recruitment messages and events at around 300 universities and colleges.

This number measures the spread of public recruitment activity, not the number of contracts signed.

Recruiters present student service as a technical role. Advertisements highlight drone operation, programming, communications, electronics, equipment repair, 3D modeling, and other technical skills.

Novosibirsk State University, for example, promotes a special one-year contract for the Unmanned Systems Forces and lists work with drone systems as a possible role. It offers students academic leave or an individual study plan, as well as the option to move from fee-paying to state-funded study.



NEW APPROACH

In this model, universities perform several functions at once. They give recruiters access to a specific age and skill group, promote the terms of service, and reduce the academic cost of temporarily leaving university.

Academic and financial guarantees can reduce the risk that students will lose their place or the tuition they have already paid.

Universities also add their own support to state payments. The Volga State University of Water Transport, for example, adopted a support package for students and cadets who sign Defense Ministry contracts for service in the USF. The package aims to help them continue their education after service.

The Ufa University of Science and Technology created separate offers for technical and IT students and later used the USF contract as part of a specialized educational track.

Far Eastern Federal University developed the most extensive model. Its package includes academic guarantees, transfer from fee-paying to state-funded study, campus accommodation, financial support, and educational assistance after service.

The university advertises first-year income of at least RUB 5.5 million. This includes a RUB 2.5 million one-time payment and monthly pay starting at RUB 240,000. The university also provides RUB 200,000 in financial assistance and offers social scholarships and other support after students return.

The legal basis for the one-year contract also changed. At the start of the campaign, observers questioned whether service members could really leave after one year while the partial-mobilization decree remained in force.

Nearly all of Russia's top universities are now involved in military recruitment. The main focus is the Unmanned Systems Forces: at least 46 of the top 50 universities encourage students to join, while 32 also run educational programs related to UAVs. Some institutions additionally recruit for BARS "Moscow" or the Africa Corps, though rights advocates warn that recruits promised service abroad could ultimately be sent to Ukraine.

NEW APPROACH

In spring 2026, the government created a special legal framework for the Unmanned Systems Forces. Presidential Decree No. 185 of March 25, 2026 authorized the defense minister to establish special service rules for particular positions.

Defense Ministry Order No. 285 of April 24, 2026 listed positions whose service members must leave the military when their contracts end. Additional Defense Ministry rules guarantee service in the Unmanned Systems Forces and prevent transfers to other branches without the service member's consent.

This clarification matters when evaluating the recruitment campaign. For positions covered by the special rules, a one-year term and discharge at the end of the contract now have a formal legal basis. They are no longer merely advertising claims. However, a candidate must meet the conditions of the special contract and receive an eligible position.

Employers and universities therefore play different roles within the same recruitment model. Employers expand the number of organizations that directly search for candidates. Universities support targeted recruitment of young people with skills needed in technologically specialized units.

This practice shows how Russia's contract recruitment model continues to evolve. Civilian institutions with their own employee, student, and professional networks now share the task of finding recruits.

For employers, this may take the form of quotas. For universities, it takes the form of targeted advertising, academic benefits, and special contract terms.

These mechanisms vary by region and institution, so individual examples cannot automatically be generalized across the country. However, they show the growing role of civilian institutions in recruiting for the Russian military and targeting specific professional and age groups.

NEW APPROACH

4.3 THE NEW RECRUITMENT MODEL

Russia originally designed contract service to build a professional military force gradually. It implied relatively long terms of service, professional training, stable pay, social benefits, and a career within the armed forces. This model allowed the military to plan personnel strength and qualifications in advance.

The prolonged war has changed the role of the contract. By 2026, it primarily serves as the legal mechanism for replacing personnel in active units. Professional qualifications still matter, but the system now places greater emphasis on maintaining a steady flow of new recruits.

To sustain that inflow, the state has steadily expanded the package offered to potential recruits. Since August 2024, the federal one-time payment has stood at RUB 400,000.

The main competition for new contract recruits, however, has shifted to the regional level. In the first quarter of 2026, the average regional payment in the sample examined reached approximately RUB 1.47 million, the highest level since the start of the war. By early April, another 12 regions had increased their payments.

Some regions offer considerably more than the national average. On August 5, 2026, for example, Primorsky Krai introduced a regional payment of RUB 3 million. Together with the federal RUB 400,000, the total one-time payment reached RUB 3.4 million. These terms also apply to students who sign special contracts to serve in the Unmanned Systems Forces.

Higher payments have also expanded the system for finding candidates. By August 2026, 56 of the 83 regions offered rewards for recruiting contract soldiers. Regional authorities set these payments in 38 regions. Private agencies and intermediary networks operate in another 18 regions. A year earlier, only 31 regions used similar systems.

NEW APPROACH

The details vary widely. In some regions, almost anyone can receive a payment for referring a candidate. In others, only employees of public institutions or particular agencies qualify. Rewards may also depend on the candidate. Some regions pay more for someone from another region or for a foreign national.

This changes the organization of recruitment. The military commissariat remains the place where the contract is formally processed, but the search for candidates increasingly takes place beforehand and through other institutions.

Municipal administrations, employers, law-enforcement agencies, educational institutions, and private intermediaries all participate in this process. For some of these actors, finding contract recruits has become a separate paid function.

At the same time, the financial model increasingly incorporates administrative tools. In Ryazan Oblast, authorities assigned enterprises numerical targets for identifying candidates. Universities have launched a separate recruitment drive for the Unmanned Systems Forces.

Target groups also include foreign nationals, recently naturalized citizens, prisoners, defendants, and people whose financial or legal circumstances make them dependent on state institutions.

This creates different layers of motivation. For one candidate, signing a contract remains primarily a choice driven by high pay. For another, the financial incentive comes together with the possibility of obtaining citizenship, resolving debt, changing their criminal-law status, or retaining educational benefits.

Another group encounters contract recruitment through an employer, public institution, or law-enforcement agency.

Russia's current contract-recruitment system is therefore no longer simply a labor market for military service. It combines financial incentives, targeted searches for candidates, and the administrative involvement of civilian institutions. Contracts remain formally voluntary, but the conditions under which people make that choice differ greatly according to their personal circumstances.

NEW APPROACH

Recruitment trends help explain why the system has expanded in this way. According to federal budget payment data, around 71,200 new contract recruits received the one-time federal payment in the first quarter of 2026. This was 20% below the first quarter of 2025 and slightly below the corresponding period of 2024.

For 2025 as a whole, the same methodology produces an estimate of approximately 363,900 contracts, 10% fewer than in 2024.

This slowdown occurred despite record-high payments. In the first quarter of 2026, budget-based calculations suggest that around 790 people signed contracts per day. By late spring, the rate may have recovered to roughly 1,000 per day.

Some regional examples also point to a shrinking pool of readily available candidates. Sources involved in recruitment reported fewer applicants and a growing need to send recruiters to other regions.



NEW APPROACH

The rising cost of recruitment and the expansion of recruitment methods should therefore be analyzed together. Higher payments continue to attract recruits and, in some cases, produce rapid increases in applications.

At the same time, the previous financial offer is increasingly insufficient to sustain the required recruitment pace. The state is responding by expanding intermediary networks, involving businesses and educational institutions, and broadening the categories of potential candidates.

By 2026, the contract model performed a function significantly different from the original concept of a professional military. Its practical purpose is now the continuous replenishment of personnel during prolonged combat operations.

Contract service has therefore become the foundation of a broader recruitment system in which money, regional administrations, civilian institutions, and special legal incentives operate simultaneously.

POSSIBLE MOBILIZATION SCENARIOS

At present, hybrid mobilization remains the most likely scenario, combining financial and other incentives with a gradual expansion of compulsory recruitment. An inertial scenario based primarily on contract recruitment is unlikely, as the current pace is no longer sufficient to offset losses at the present intensity of hostilities. Open mass mobilization has a medium probability. It carries significant political risks for the Kremlin, as it could cross one of the few remaining “red lines” of Russian society and undermine the “Special Military Operation” framework.

A hybrid approach would allow Russia to increase the flow of personnel while limiting the political costs of open mobilization. It would involve raising regional recruitment quotas while using both contract recruitment and compulsory measures. This would spread the social and political consequences over time, reduce pressure on the system for training new recruits, and gradually increase the size of Russia’s military contingent.

At the same time, mobilization in Russia is no longer simply a decision that may be taken this year or next. The state apparatus is systematically adapting to a mobilization model that can be implemented in waves and at different levels of scale, from partial to general mobilization. In parallel, Russia is building a new mobilization pool through military socialization of society, encompassing education, the media, the church, culture, and quasi-civil society. In the medium and long term, the objective is to shape generations for whom mobilization will be perceived not as an extraordinary event, but as a planned and expected process.

MOBILIZATION SCENARIOS

5.1 INERTIAL SCENARIO: LOW PROBABILITY

A scenario in which Russia continues to rely primarily on a “mercenary” model of military recruitment, combined with non-monetary incentives for signing a contract, such as the termination of criminal proceedings or obtaining Russian citizenship, is viable only if the intensity of Russia’s offensive operations declines. This is even more important if no new fronts are opened, either against Ukraine or against other states or blocs.

Through its statements, actions, and preparations, Moscow has demonstrated that it does not intend to reduce the intensity of hostilities against Ukraine and does not rule out expanding the front by hundreds of kilometers. Under these conditions, and given the fundamental change in the nature of warfare resulting from the widespread use of drones, which is driving steadily increasing personnel losses, the current pace of contract recruitment is no longer sufficient. Maintaining the current rate of replenishment of Russia’s armed forces is already difficult, and as the war continues, this challenge will become increasingly difficult to overcome even without further escalation.

Russia’s military-political leadership demonstrated in 2022 that, when necessary, it is prepared to abandon an inertial approach and make decisions without relying on its own propaganda or overly optimistic military reports.

MOBILIZATION SCENARIOS

5.2 OPEN MASS MOBILIZATION: MEDIUM PROBABILITY

The scenario of open mass mobilization is actively discussed in Russian society and among Russian elites. Anxiety is heightened both by the authoritarian nature of decision-making and by previous experience: both the full-scale invasion and the first wave of mass mobilization were preceded only by rumors, while the Kremlin denied that such plans existed.

The need for a sharp increase in the flow of personnel into the Russian army became evident in 2023. At the same time, the risks associated with compulsory mass mobilization are equally clear. It could cross what is effectively the only remaining “red line” for Russian society. The argument that mobilization is necessary to demobilize those forcibly recruited since 2022 is unlikely to be sufficient, as Russian society shows little empathy even toward this category of servicemen.

Open mass mobilization would also undermine the “Special Military Operation” framework, for which Russian propaganda has yet to offer an alternative. Ultimately, this would mean resorting to one of the two most extreme instruments still available to Russia: mass mobilization and the use of nuclear weapons. If this threat fails to produce the desired outcome, namely real and rapid gains on the battlefield, the Kremlin would be left with only one remaining option, which under current conditions would receive no support from Russian society, China, or the Global South.

Despite these risks, this scenario has a medium probability, given the Kremlin’s previous decision-making record and the frequently irrational nature of its decisions. If such a resolution takes place, the authorities are likely to seek to carry out the new compulsory recruitment campaign within a short timeframe, drawing on the lessons of the first mobilization wave. Recruitment would likely avoid concentrating efforts in the largest cities, instead in regions with the lowest one-time contract payments. This approach would help compensate for shortfalls caused by financial constraints on regional budgets while also reducing the negative media impact.

MOBILIZATION SCENARIOS

5.3 HYBRID MOBILIZATION: HIGH PROBABILITY

At this stage, hybrid mobilization is the most likely scenario, combining elements of the two previous scenarios. Given the clear limitations of the inertial approach and the risks associated with open mass mobilization, Russia's military-political leadership is likely to view a hybrid approach as the most effective option.

Open compulsory mobilization would primarily have a negative effect on public perceptions of the federal government. By contrast, increasing mandatory regional quotas for the monthly recruitment of Russian men into the armed forces, while allowing regional authorities to choose between contract recruitment and compulsory mobilization, is intended to shift public discontent toward local authorities.

Hybrid mobilization, combining financial and other incentives with additional compulsory recruitment, would allow Russia to increase pressure on the battlefield while spreading the resulting social and political costs over time. This approach is consistent with Vladimir Putin's demonstrated willingness to continue the war for an indefinite period. In Moscow's view, sustained pressure on the battlefield, combined with a gradual expansion of the military contingent rather than merely replacing losses, should eventually produce results and enable Russia to achieve its objectives through military means alone.

In addition, a gradual hybrid mobilization would help prevent the military training and deployment system from becoming overloaded while allowing Russia to recruit roughly the same number of personnel as during the first wave of compulsory mobilization. Accordingly, after the State Duma elections, systematic contract recruitment is likely to continue, alongside a noticeable increase in cases of compulsory mobilization.

MOBILIZATION SCENARIOS

Each scenario outlined above is relevant to the short-term outlook and to planning appropriate responses. Russia's state apparatus is completing its transition to a mobilization model that can be implemented in waves and at different levels of scale, from partial to general mobilization. Russia is now significantly better prepared for mobilization than in 2022, and likely better prepared than any other country in 2026.

The Russian Ministry of Defense already has a clear understanding of the available mobilization pool and is continuously expanding its capacity to obtain more complete and up-to-date information about it. At the same time, administrative mechanisms for compelling those liable for military service to comply with mobilization orders are being further developed.

However, the data presented in this report and the analysis of the Russian authorities' approach to mobilization are even more important for understanding the medium- and long-term outlook. From this perspective, it matters less whether Russia conducts compulsory mobilization this year or next. Alongside the systematic registration and monitoring of the mobilization pool, a much more fundamental process is underway: the creation of a new mobilization pool better suited to the conditions of permanent war.

This process can be described as military socialization. It involves preschool, secondary, and higher education, quasi-civil society, the church, the media, culture, and other spheres. In the medium and long term, the main objective is to shape generations for whom, unlike the current ones, mobilization will be perceived not as an extraordinary event, but as planned and even expected.



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